

# Case Study

## Infrastructure (Planning and Design Phase)

### Health Infrastructure and Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District | Nepean Hospital Stage 1 Redevelopment

In November 2016, the NSW Government committed \$576 million for the Stage 1 major expansion and upgrade of Nepean Hospital and community-based services to provide essential health care for the growing population in western Sydney.

First built in 1956 as a district hospital at the base of the Blue Mountains, Nepean Hospital now services a population of more than 300,000 residents and is the major specialist referral hospital. The hospital has undergone several minor upgrades over the past 60 years or so. As health care changes and the community grows and diversifies, the hospital is undergoing a major transformation to ensure it is equipped to respond to the community's health needs now and into the future and the clinician who will provide care for the community.



#### Objectives:

The Nepean Redevelopment Stage 1 intends to deliver an innovative and welcoming health facility to support the provision of high quality clinical care and achieve the best outcomes and experience for patients and their families and carers. Providing meaningful and tangible community engagement is considered key to the success of the redevelopment and the ongoing trust placed in the Nepean Hospital and the public health system.

Over the past two and a half years, the project's communication and engagement team has developed and delivered a comprehensive program of consultation resulting in more than 1,000 interactions with hundreds of community stakeholders. The intent is to translate consumer (our patients, carers and staff) input into innovative, safe, efficient and accessible design solutions. We want to build anticipation and enthusiasm for the project, as well a sense of community ownership, confidence and pride in the hospital and its future.

This is particularly important – and challenging - in an area where the community is demographically, culturally and geographically diverse and growing rapidly.

“Winning the Award for Infrastructure – Planning and Design for Nepean Redevelopment Stage 1 has been a great motivator for our project team as we head into the planning and design phase for Stage 2. It has also reassured us that we are on the right track when it comes to meaningful and effective community engagement.”

In 2020, the recognition we received at the IAP2 awards will help us break down some of the traditional boundaries around early and regular community participation in the hospital design and planning process. I am also hoping it will give us a mandate to try new methods of engagement across all our health projects.”

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## Describe some of the challenges faced:

When funding was announced for Stage 1 of the Nepean Redevelopment there was an overwhelmingly positive response by the community. The team has worked hard to deliver regular, transparent and accessible communications to maintain this positive sentiment wherever possible.

But as with all major capital works projects, there were still many challenges faced with community engagement during the planning and design phase. For example: educating the community about capital works and planning processes; managing expectations about the scope of services to be delivered; and ensuring information was accessible to a geographically dispersed and culturally diverse community.

- **Managing expectations – Length of the project and why we chose to include the services we did**

From the outset, the team faced the challenge of explaining the redevelopment project and just what it meant to the community. Often, people do not understand the time it takes to complete a project and just what is involved in planning and delivering a major capital works project. This is especially challenging where the hospital needs to maintain services provision.

The team developed an early engagement plan that was focussed on education and on setting and managing expectations. This included tailored key messages, education tools such as the 'How to Build a Hospital' animation, and regular community consultation sessions, newsletters and online communications. The team was particularly keen to explain that the clinical services included in Stage 1 were determined by extensive hospital staff and community consultation, current patient data and future health need projections.

The outcome was that people felt appropriately engaged and developed an early understanding of the redevelopment project. Regular and consistent communications.

- **Demonstrating progress – bringing the project out from behind boardrooms and closed doors**

Much of the planning and design phase is done behind closed doors which makes it hard to demonstrate that real progress is being made. The team committed to a transparent communications strategy to ensure the community felt engaged and to build a level of trust in the project. This included:

- Installing external site boards outlining the key project stages and timeframes
- Installing a project wall in a main hospital area to display the latest newsletters and information
- Encouraging public participation through an EOI campaign and consumer committee
- Launching a dedicated project website and Instagram account – focusing on the human side of the project
- Developing patient and staff benefit stories (rather than fixating on the bricks and mortar of the project)
- Regularly visiting key community groups and organisations to provide updates and balancing consumer feedback.

- **Time Management - Conflicting clinical needs and tight project timeframes**

Throughout the project's planning and design phase, creating meaningful engagement and consultation opportunities was a high priority for the project team.

While community engagement is an extremely valuable element to the project, it was also time-consuming for the project team, which is often pulled in many different directions at once. The only way to mitigate this on-going challenge was to plan ahead as much as possible, manage expectations, share the workload and maintain open and transparent dialogue at all times.

Further reinforcing this commitment, the project team works as an "integrated project team", where members from Nepean Blue Mountains Local Health District, Health Infrastructure, contractors and suppliers all work as one team, rather than separate entities to deliver better project outcomes with shared goals.

For example, during the consultation roadshow, all of the team was involved – from the receptionist to the senior project director, everyone joined in to make sure we had appropriate project representation at all engagement and consultation opportunities.